

The Honorable Patrick R. Donahoe
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260-3100

Dear Postmaster General Donahoe:

We understand that the United States Postal Service (USPS) is seeking to overcome financial challenges and appreciate that a variety of actions will be necessary. However, we are concerned about the focus on closures of Post Office locations and processing centers within Iowa. Alarming, the closure effort seems to be disproportionately targeted to facilities in Iowa and West Virginia. We understand that there will have to be some closings nationwide, but those closures should be equally distributed across states and regions. No state or postal district should bear an undue burden.

As leaders from across the state of Iowa, we have formed a group called "Iowans for Post Office Services". Our focus is not to fight the USPS, but rather we hope to help save it. We want the USPS to provide adequate, effective, and efficient services to all communities, including rural communities.

The smallest 10,000 Post Offices in the United States make up about 7 tenths of 1% of the USPS budget. Even if all of those 10,000 offices were closed, it would take a decade before the relevant costs were eliminated in this small slice of overall USPS expenses. For example, rental commitments remain even if the Post Office is closed and there would be significant installation costs for new cluster boxes in these towns.

The Post Offices being targeted for closure in Iowa are primarily in rural communities. Unlike large cities, rural communities face great hardships with the closing of their Post Offices because residents do not have the luxury of going to another retailer that sells stamps or accepts packages. Loss of Post Offices in rural Iowa also hinders economic development and presents a challenge for attracting and maintaining businesses. In addition, existing businesses incur time and labor costs associated with sending staff to mail packages in neighboring communities. A mail carrier can only take packages up to 13 ounces. Most businesses mail packages larger than that every day. Businesses without a local post office would be put at an economic disadvantage. President Obama recently formed the White House Rural Council which seeks ways to strengthen rural communities and promote economic growth. The actions of the USPS in Iowa are complicating the Council's mission and negatively impacting the citizens and businesses within Iowa during a fragile economic recovery.

Most rural towns in Iowa have a large senior citizen population, and in some, like Stratford, Iowa, 25 percent of the population is over the age of 65. These older citizens receive medications in the mail and their primary connection to the outside world is through the mail they send and receive.

The current closure process of the USPS does not seem to have any rhyme or reason. Postal representatives say that they are targeting Post Offices that are vacant and are being run by an Officer in Charge because the previous Postmaster retired. Yet, thankfully only some of the Post Offices with an Officer in Charge have received closure notices. The discrepancy across USPS districts and states is also concerning. Communications from Postal Service leadership to

community and state leaders has been sporadic and uncoordinated. For example, on Tuesday, July 27, 2011, many communities in the state learned about potential closures for 178 additional Iowa communities by reading the morning newspaper, without prior notification or communication from the Postal Service. Requests for information on corresponding rationale are met with exorbitant fees for the requested information – for example Sioux City officials were told it would cost \$831,000 to receive information providing rationale on why the Postal Service decided to close Sioux City's mail processing center and move the work to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The Postal Service could have provided a simple memo summarizing the decision making process and rationale. The Postal Service's overall approach shows disregard for the many partners the Postal Service has in Iowa.

We request the following:

1. A meeting between you and/or other senior USPS officials, including Gail Duba, District Manager for the Hawkeye District, to address our concerns in the very near future.
2. The establishment of a Blue Ribbon commission to make holistic recommendations on how to solve USPS fiscal challenges in a comprehensive fashion that does not focus on closures within just a few rural states like Iowa.
3. Establishing a moratorium on the closure of Postal facilities for a year within the State of Iowa, or until our concerns can be adequately addressed and a clear rationale provided for the disproportionate amount of closings in Iowa.

We strongly believe that a holistic solution would examine a myriad of options and recommendations and think beyond current laws and regulations. One such idea we urge for consideration is a shared services concept where Postmasters could serve multiple offices. We believe that many communities would welcome reduced hours to support a shared Postmaster, in order to keep their Post Office open. Other countries with thriving mail delivery systems that can provide best practices. All types of mail should be examined.

We believe there are many options that the Postal Service and congressional leaders should consider. Revising your business plan may be the best place to start. Successful companies revisit their business model regularly, even daily, to ensure business health. We feel that the Postal Service needs to take a hard look at other ways to make their business profitable, and we welcome the opportunity to work with the United States Postal Service to help representatives achieve this goal.

Sincerely,

Donny Hobbs
Mayor, City of Lohrville, Iowa
Director, Iowans for Post Office Services

Terry E. Branstad
Governor, State of Iowa

cc: Gail Duba, District Manager, Hawkeye District, United States Postal Service